United Nations A/CN.10/PV.242

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

242nd meeting

Monday, 9 April 2001, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President: Ms. Quarless ..... (Jamaica)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairperson: I declare open the 2001 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

I wish to express my appreciation to the members of the Commission for my election by acclamation and for the confidence they have thus invested in the Chair.

On behalf of the members of the Commission, allow me at the outset to acknowledge with appreciation the continued stewardship of Mr. Jin Yongjian, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, whose Department services the United Nations Disarmament Commission, and of Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, whose Department provides substantive support for the work of the Commission.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairperson: I direct the Commission's attention to document A/CN.10/L.49, which is based on document A/CN.10/L.48, entitled "Provisional agenda". Members of the Commission may recall that, at its organizational session on 1 December 2000, the Commission formally adopted the provisional agenda. Therefore, at this meeting, the Commission will simply take note of document A/CN.10/L.49, together with the provisional programme of work contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.1, which was also distributed and discussed at the organizational session.

Election of officers

The Chairperson: The Commission is still to elect two Vice-Chairmen from the Group of African States, two Vice-Chairmen from the Group of Western European and Other States and one Vice-Chairman from the Group of Eastern European States. I should also inform the Commission that Mr. Roberto Lema, a Vice-Chairman of Bolivia, has left the country. Accordingly, the Latin American and Caribbean Group has nominated Mrs. Martha Beatriz López de Mitre, chargé d'affaires of Bolivia, to serve as Vice-Chair of the Commission in his place.

Where candidates from the Group of African States are concerned, I have been informed that consultations are still ongoing and that we should receive these nominations shortly. Accordingly, I therefore suggest that we take this up at a later stage.

I wish to inform the Commission that the Group of Western European and Other States has nominated Mr. Henrik Salander of Sweden and Mr. Niklas Lindqvist of Finland and that the Group of Eastern European States has nominated Mr. Yurii Onishchenko of Ukraine to be the Vice-Chairmen of the Commission.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Henrik Salander of Sweden, Mr. Niklas Lindqvist of Finland, Mr. Yurii

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Onishchenko of Ukraine and Mrs. Martha Beatriz López de Mitre of Bolivia as Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission.

It was so decided.

The Chairperson: Allow me on behalf of the Commission and the other members of the Bureau to warmly congratulate the newly elected officers and to wish them every success in the discharge of their duties. I am confident that they will make a valuable contribution to the work of the Commission this year and I look forward to their support and good counsel.

Organization of work

The Chairperson: I would like to draw the Commission's attention to the general programme of work for the current session. As members may recall, document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.1 was distributed during the organizational session on 1 December 2000. Delegations should note that the programme of work is an indicative timetable for the work of the Commission and is therefore subject to further adjustment, as necessary. The timetable, which was also distributed in December, will remain unchanged.

For our deliberations in the second week, the Bureau will consider an informal paper scheduling meetings for the two Working Groups, in consultation with the Chairmen of the subsidiary bodies. This paper will be issued by the Secretariat in due course.

As regards the allocation of time for each agenda item, the principle of equal apportionment of time will be observed, with flexibility shown as and when required. Since both items under consideration are in their second year, we might expect that both Working Groups would require an equivalent number of meetings. As I have noted before, the weekly timetable and programme of work will take into account these considerations, as well as the specific needs of each subsidiary body, through consultation with the Chairmen of the Working Groups.

As members will see in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.1 containing the general programme of work, four meetings have been allocated to the general exchange of views. I invite delegations wishing to make statements to inscribe their names on the list of speakers with the Secretariat as soon as possible. The deadline for such inscription is 6 p.m. today. May I remind delegations that, as a rule, 35 copies of statements should be provided to the Secretariat.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission to proceed in this manner.

It was so decided.

The Chairperson: Allow me briefly to comment on the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission. As has been the practice in previous years, representatives of these organizations are welcome to attend the plenary meetings and meetings of the Committee of the Whole of the Disarmament Commission as observers.

Statement by the Chairperson

The Chairperson: It is my hope that we have come to this session of the Disarmament Commission with a fresh vision and renewed expectation of what we might realistically accomplish in light of the positive steps achieved during the past year. Indeed, the year 2000 should be remembered for the significant events that served to infuse a new spirit into the dialogue on the maintenance of international peace and security and that renewed collective commitment to both nuclear and conventional non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons secured an important undertaking from the nuclear-weapon States for the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit also made a strong call for concerted action towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction; towards combating the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons; and towards eliminating the danger posed by landmines. The Security Council, during the Millennium Summit, underscored the importance of demobilization and disarmament in post-conflict areas in the search for durable peace.

Unquestionably, within the context of what remains to be done, these positive signs represent only a crack in the opening of a door. For we still seek the achievement of universality in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; we still look forward to early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; we are yet to reach agreement to begin negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty; and we still pursue security assurances and confidence-

building measures to strengthen the regime for the maintenance of international peace and security.

But what is important is that the door has been opened. We must now work collectively and diligently to ensure that expressed good intention will ultimately be transformed into demonstrable action. In this effort, the Disarmament Commission has an integral role to play. Successive resolutions of the General Assembly on the report of this Commission reaffirm its role as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations.

This Commission, then, by its mandate and by its working methods, is uniquely placed as the only universal organ which promotes deliberation, negotiation and consensus-building towards strengthening the framework for the enhancement of international peace and security. Its focus on no more than three items over a three-year period allows for fuller exchange, for a fleshing-out of the issues and for every position to be heard. It allows time to explore areas of convergence and to pursue what is incrementally possible. In the field of international peace and security, where the dividends to be gained through dialogue are immeasurable, the contribution of the Disarmament Commission should not be undervalued.

I therefore exhort the members of this Commission to make the most of the positive international climate and the opportunity for progress offered by the modest achievements of the past year and to utilize to the fullest this unique forum to promote dialogue and greater understanding among States so that we may make meaningful progress on the disarmament agenda.

Permit me now to make general observations on our work for this substantive session. As delegations are aware, the Commission, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 55/33 C, will continue its consideration of two items: "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms". I am sure that the members of the Commission will agree that a solid foundation was laid for our work in the Working Groups last year.

Working Group I, mandated to explore the item "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" under the chairmanship of the representative of Ghana, Mr. Osei, examined the relevant issues and developments in the area of nuclear disarmament. On the basis of last year's negotiations, delegations now have a working paper of the Chair, which carefully identifies and addresses the fundamental issues in the field of nuclear disarmament and can provide a good basis for the further work of the Group. It is my hope that all members will invest the creativity and required political will in our deliberations in the coming weeks, so that by the end of this session we might be closer to identifying areas of convergence on this item.

Working Group II will continue its consideration of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms under the chairmanship of the representative of Argentina, Ms. Martinic. Delegations should have received a Chairman's non-paper addressing this issue. I trust that this document will guide the upcoming discussions and ultimately bring us closer to consensus on practical measures to enhance confidence and to contribute to reducing regional and international tension.

I wish to assure the Chairs of the Working Groups of the fullest confidence and support of the Chair as they embark on their challenging tasks towards consensus-building for this session.

General exchange of views

The Chairperson: I call on the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs to open the general exchange of views.

Mr. Dhanapala (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): I appreciate this privilege of addressing the Commission once again as it opens a new session. I begin by congratulating you, Madam, and your Bureau and by pledging the full cooperation and substantive support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for your efforts throughout the important deliberations ahead. May I congratulate you in particular for achieving the unique distinction of being the first woman to chair this Commission. This marks another welcome breakthrough in the proverbial glass ceiling.

I would like at the outset to recall that the Commission will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year, making it no doubt older than many of the

representatives in this room today. The global conditions for pursuing disarmament goals have evolved dramatically since 4 February 1952, when the Commission — then meeting at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris — opened its first session. It is no small coincidence that, just as these conditions have changed, so too has the work of the Commission fluctuated between periods of productivity and relative decline.

The General Assembly's assessment of the conditions in 1952 was spelled out in the preamble of the resolution creating the Commission. In clear and sombre terms, the Member States were

> "Moved by anxiety at the general lack of confidence plaguing the world and leading to the burden of increasing armaments and the fear of war". (*resolution 502 (VI), first preambular paragraph*)

Many of those sentiments linger even today, in the light of recent trends of rising military expenditures, mounting civilian casualties in armed conflicts and the continuing risks of catastrophic wars, up to and including nuclear war.

Yet the relevance today of that early resolution extends beyond its tone. It addresses matters of substance as well. It stated that the Commission was to address "the regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments", as well as measures concerning "the elimination of all major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". (*ibid., fourth preambular paragraph*)

The close resemblance between the Commission's agenda then and now is a poignant reminder of the extraordinary challenges that lie ahead in these important fields. The challenge of nuclear disarmament is particularly demanding, for as awesome as are the social, economic, and environmental costs of producing nuclear weapons, those costs would pale in comparison to those that would arise as a result of a nuclear war. Progress toward achieving literally every goal in the Charter tacitly assumes the non-occurrence of such a war. The States parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) agreed last year that this challenge could not be overcome by halfway measures. Instead, they concluded that

> "the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons." (*NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Part I), p. 15, para. 2*)

The nuclear-weapon States parties took a positive step in that direction by making an

> "unequivocal undertaking ... to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament". (*ibid., p. 14, para. 6*)

And, yet, because the NPT is not yet a universal treaty, it is vitally important for the world community to continue its determined efforts to discover the ways and means of achieving nuclear disarmament as soon as possible. The Commission has a unique role to play in this regard. The Conference on Disarmament — the world's only multilateral negotiating body for disarmament — has for many years been unable to reach a consensus on a work agenda. As for the First Committee, it considers almost 50 resolutions each year, of which nuclear disarmament is only one among numerous issues it must address. The Commission, however, combines its universal membership with a mandate that allows it to focus its deliberations intensely on two crucial issues relating to nuclear disarmament and conventional arms control.

In so doing, the Commission is playing an extremely important role in the slow, incremental process of building and maintaining global disarmament norms. Its record of achievement over the last decade — recognizing that it is exclusively a deliberative body — is impressive indeed. In 1999, it reached a consensus on two sets of guidelines concerning the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and on conventional arms control, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace following armed conflicts. In 1996, it reached agreement on guidelines for international arms transfers. In 1993, it was able to agree on guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security. And in 1992, it issued guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters.

Reaching a global consensus on disarmament matters is never easy, given the inherent sensitivity of the issues. Yet, reaching such a consensus five times in a decade is by any reasonable definition an impressive feat. Though the guidelines are not legally binding, they play a key role in establishing agreed ground rules for the conduct of national security policies in an increasingly interdependent global environment. These

agreed guidelines offer individual citizens — including those who work in legislatures, non-governmental groups, the news media, academia and religious institutions — a benchmark against which the actions of States can be assessed.

If the Commission is to be faulted for anything, its so-called sin is not doing more to publicize its accomplishments for the entire world to understand and to use. These guidelines are not mere pieces of parchment, but are invaluable, even inspirational, tools for concrete national and international initiatives. They deserve to be read by wider publics. For that reason, I am pleased to say that the Department for Disarmament Affairs has placed on its Web site the full texts of all the guidelines and recommendations that the Commission has approved since its re-establishment after the General Assembly's first special session on disarmament, held in 1978.

Though the last decade was not a time of nuclear war, it was indeed a time of devastating bloodshed, involving the use of an ever-expanding variety of conventional arms; an era also marked by the advent of the so-called revolution in military affairs. By some estimates, over five million people have been killed in armed conflicts during the post-cold-war era. Military budgets have reportedly grown to around $800 billion a year, about 90 per cent of cold war levels. Arms exports to many highly unstable regions are also on the rise. We continue to witness serious problems in enforcing arms embargoes mandated by the Security Council, particularly in Africa. Illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons has evolved from a national and regional problem into a crisis of truly global dimensions, one that will be the focus of a major international conference at the United Nations next July.

This expenditure, this loss of life and this disrespect for the rule of law have eroded human security everywhere. It is therefore highly appropriate that the Commission again focus its attention on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. One of the classic measures in that field concerns the importance of enhancing transparency over the production, stockpiling and transfer of arms. It is worth recalling that the Commission's founding resolution gave some considerable weight to that issue in outlining the key principles that were to guide the work of the Commission. Indeed, the first such principle found in that resolution provided that,

> "In a system of guaranteed disarmament there must be progressive disclosure and verification on a continuing basis of all armed forces ... and all armaments including atomic". (*resolution 502 (VI), para. 3 (a)*)

Building upon work begun during the League of Nations, the United Nations has continued and progressively expanded its efforts to gather data on the production of and trade in arms. The United Nations Register on Conventional Arms is one such tool by which that goal is pursued with respect to seven categories of major conventional weapons systems. Another is the standardized reporting instrument for military expenditures. Perhaps one of the most unfortunate confidence-reduction measures in this field relates to the failure of many States either to use these two specific tools or to use them regularly.

Unlike weapons of mass destruction — which have either been outlawed internationally or are slated for elimination worldwide — conventional arms have many legitimate purposes, particularly with respect to implementing the inherent right to individual or collective self-defence found in Article 51 of the Charter. Having such legitimate uses, large industries having vested interests in the continued production and export of such arms have grown. Furthermore, such arms are also used for a variety of foreign policy purposes, including the collective defence of international peace and security under Chapter VII of the Charter. These legal, economic and political factors have made conventional arms control a very difficult challenge indeed, but one worthy of the continued efforts of diplomats and private citizens everywhere.

As intractable as many of these problems have been, it is vitally important for Member States to continue their search for progress, for the same Member States also have enormously significant interests to advance through the success of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Reductions in the production of such arms free up resources for use elsewhere in society. Controls that reduce the intensity or duration of armed conflicts enhance prospects for social and economic development. Even the environment stands to gain from progress in these areas. The wider the gains, the wider will be the political support for the new controls,

and the greater will be the likelihood that they will be adopted and enforced.

Progress in the field of conventional arms control is therefore an entirely reasonable objective to pursue. One need only look at the enormous reductions in conventional arms that followed from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Governments worldwide are becoming more and more receptive to new controls in this field. This is particularly evident in regional initiatives that have emerged in recent years from Latin America, Europe, the Economic Community of West African States moratorium and other efforts now under way in these regions and elsewhere. Perhaps the swelling interest in the small arms conference to be held next July will serve as a further inducement for progress in the Commission's deliberations in the conventional arms field. The interest that non-governmental groups have shown in that event is further evidence of the support that exists in civil society for such progress in the months and years ahead.

As we begin our deliberations today, let us not simply recall, but build upon the broad consensus manifested in the Millennium Declaration and in many other events last year that signalled the collective will of the peoples of the world for a new beginning on disarmament issues in the new millennium. Let us make this a new beginning. Let us begin today.

Mr. Salander (Sweden): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the 15 member States of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries of Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

Let me start by congratulating you warmly, Madam Chairperson, on your election as Chairperson of the 2001 session of the Disarmament Commission. We are confident that under your able guidance we will further develop the two agenda items so that we will come to a successful conclusion next year. I would also like to thank the outgoing Chairman for his relentless efforts in support of the success of the Commission's work. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for his inspiring introductory statement.

The Disarmament Commission resumes its work this year with two items on its agenda, namely, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms". Our objective is to agree on recommendations for the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Those recommendations will be of use to all Member States in their policy-making in the respective fields.

Let me turn, first of all, to the topic of ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. The European Union continues to aim to consolidate in an irreversible manner the cessation and reversal of the arms race that ensued in the wake of the cold war, to make concrete progress towards nuclear disarmament and to reinforce the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Against that background, the success of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was a welcome and important achievement that built upon the principles and objectives of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The European Union has on many occasions expressed its satisfaction with the adoption of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. One such occasion was last year's session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, which confirmed the agreements contained in the Final Document and thus carried the work forward. The European Union, for its part, will fulfil its responsibility by contributing to the full implementation of the Final Document.

The European Union strongly believes that the work of the Disarmament Commission regarding ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament should indeed build on the agreement reached by all States parties at the NPT Review Conference. We therefore believe it important that the report of this year's deliberations adhere as far as possible to the agreed language in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. The European Union put forward some proposals in that regard in last year's conference room paper 2 and working paper 3, respectively.

At last year's Conference, the 187 States parties — made up of nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States — agreed unanimously on a number of practical steps which, in the view of the

European Union, constitute a mutually reinforcing set of ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. The European Union believes that the principles established at the Conference should be adhered to and that all the practical steps agreed by the States parties to the NPT should be fully implemented.

In that regard, the European Union reiterates its call for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally effective verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament; and the early entry into force and full implementation of START II and the conclusion of START III, as soon as possible.

As regards work in the Conference on Disarmament, the European Union is still hopeful that the Conference will soon be able to overcome the obstacles to the effective launch of its work, thus responding to the legitimate expectations of the international community. The success of this endeavour requires that the security concerns of all States be taken into account. The immediate launch of the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, as well as dealing with both nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space within subsidiary bodies whose mandates will need to be both pragmatic and substantial in order to be accepted by all, constitute a basis for substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament.

This year, the Disarmament Commission will also continue to work on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. The European Union hopes that this year's session will bring about fruitful discussions leading to concrete and comprehensive recommendations in that field. The recommendations should be designed to make progress in strengthening confidence and security and in achieving disarmament, so as to build an environment of cooperative security and to give effect and expression to the duty of Member States to refrain from the use or threat of force in their international relations.

The European Union therefore supports and encourages efforts aimed at promoting confidence- and security-building measures. We believe that the Disarmament Commission can make a useful contribution in that field by preparing a catalogue of military confidence- and security-building measures. In that context, the European Union welcomes the fact that a paper has been put forward by the Chairperson of Working Group II, on confidence-building measures, which includes, among other things, principles as well as practical measures. We are prepared to work on the basis of that paper and will revert to it with more specific comments and proposals for refinement at a later stage.

Confidence- and security-building measures are valuable tools in conflict prevention as well as in post-conflict stabilization and rehabilitation. The essential task of arms control in both situations is to create a positive process where the measures that are implemented can create confidence and security through transparency and predictability. That also implies that they are an integrated part of a larger political process. The European Union actively promotes the adoption of confidence- and security-building measures, which can be particularly useful in situations where trust needs to be built step by step. They can institutionalize cooperation in an evolutionary process of confidence- and security-building.

The objective of confidence- and security-building measures is to establish new patterns of interaction that are perceived as beneficial by the parties involved, and to make those patterns hard to reverse should perturbations occur. That is, confidence- and security-building measures should have an "all-weather" capability. Openness and predictability are more important than ever in times of increased tension. This implies, inter alia, verification regimes that ensure the reliability of the information that is provided.

Consideration could also be given to the establishment, on a voluntary basis, of regional, subregional or bilateral confidence- and security-building measures to meet specific needs. They could complement, not duplicate or replace, existing confidence- and security-building measures or arms-control agreements, and they should contribute to strengthening overall security and stability, in accordance with the principles of indivisible security and the right of every State to freely choose its security arrangements.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) area is a prime example of where confidence- and security-building measures have contributed to a new pattern of interaction. Since the first confidence- and security-building measures were agreed at the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe in the mid-1980s, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the successive Vienna Documents have been instrumental in the creation of a new military culture of openness and transparency. Those documents, along with the Treaty on Open Skies, which is still pending ratification by some signatory States, constitute the cornerstone of confidence- and security-building measures on conventional arms in Europe, and are fully supported by the European Union.

Confidence- and security-building should cover not only measures, but also principles. The OSCE Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security contains norms that are fundamental to the European Union member States and to other OSCE participating States. The Code stipulates, inter alia, that all armed forces must be under effective democratic and constitutional control and must have clearly defined tasks. The European Union expresses the hope that the Disarmament Commission will endorse those principles in its recommendations. Furthermore, all participating States are committed to educate their military personnel in international humanitarian law.

The 1998 European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports has ushered in a new degree of transparency among Governments in arms transactions. The Code builds upon common criteria for arms exports, and also establishes an information-exchange and consultations mechanism.

The OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, adopted last November, is one example of a comprehensive document containing important transparency measures, but it goes much further in that it requests participating States to adopt a number of norms, principles and measures related to manufacturing, marking, record-keeping, export controls and criteria, management of stockpiles, reduction of surpluses, destruction, et cetera.

The Document is an important contribution to the upcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The European Union is fully committed to a successful outcome of the Conference, and believes that provisions concerning confidence-building measures should be included in any programme of action resulting from the Conference. The European Union is of the opinion that such a programme of action should encompass concrete solutions agreed upon by Member States as well as political commitments, standards and guidelines for our future work.

The Joint Action of 17 December 1998 on the European Union's contribution to combating the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons encompasses confidence- and security-building measures, and in that spirit we provide technical and financial assistance to programmes and projects related to small arms and light weapons, notably in Cambodia, Mozambique and Georgia.

The European Union considers transparency in armaments as fundamental in building confidence and security. In that context, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a key instrument. The European Union is committed to securing the widest possible participation in the Register, and to improving its effectiveness in a way that could contribute to regional and subregional confidence-building efforts.

The European Union reiterates its endorsement of General Assembly resolutions 54/43, entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures", and 55/33 G, entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". Those resolutions are positive contributions to the enhancement and development of confidence-building measures. We also recall our support for the May 1996 Disarmament Commission guidelines for arms transfers, as well as the Commission's April 1999 guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace.

The European Union is committed to continuing to participate actively in all appropriate forums to discuss and elaborate concrete security and confidence-building measures that can contribute to increased security and cooperation between all Member States of the United Nations. We emphasize that our deliberations should result in concrete recommendations that could guide further action by

Member States. Under your able guidance, Madam Chairperson, and with the work already done by the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, I am confident that we will have fruitful discussions and a productive session in the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Navarrete (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes first to congratulate you warmly, Madam Chairperson, on your election to serve as Chairperson of the Disarmament Commission. We also wish to offer you the unswerving support of the Mexican delegation in your work to ensure success in our work. We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau you head. We particularly wish to record our recognition of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the outstanding work accomplished by the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Javad Zarif, when he served as Chairman of the Commission in 2000.

My delegation is pleased to begin the work of the Commission, in accordance with the agreements reflected in General Assembly decision 52/492, with a three-week session with two substantive agenda items. We encourage delegations to make the best possible use of the time available for our debates, in order to move forward proposals and suggestions that will make it possible to build the necessary consensus.

It is Mexico's understanding that there is a propitious climate for the analysis of disarmament issues in the multilateral forums. This was evidenced by the successful outcome of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the active participation of Member States in the preparatory process for the upcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. In this connection, interesting proposals have been made in the Conference on Disarmament that we hope provide us an incentive to reach an agreement on its programme of work. We also consider that the Disarmament Commission should play its assigned role as a deliberative body in the context of existing disarmament machinery.

For the second consecutive year the Disarmament Commission will consider items relating to ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, as well as practical ways to build confidence in the field of conventional weapons.

With regard to the first of these items, we would like to thank Mr. Yaw Odei Osei of Ghana, who, in his capacity as Chairman of Working Group I, has held informal consultations with delegations on the possible content of the document that will guide our work in the course of this session. We agree that the earlier discussions on the proposed format should be the basis for defining the recommendations that the Commission will propose on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament.

My delegation believes that a wide-ranging approach should be adopted to consider this issue. Together with the progress made in multilateral forums, those national, bilateral or regional initiatives that have had an impact on the nuclear disarmament process should also be included, as well as the consideration of the main political obstacles before us. As an example of a unilateral initiative, we wish to express our satisfaction with the ratification on 27 February 2001 of Protocols I and II of the Pelindaba Treaty by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Identifying specific measures to achieve nuclear disarmament is not an easy task, and it requires the participation of all Member States.

Progress has been made in reviewing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. However, there are still matters pending, such as achieving the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of ad hoc committees on nuclear disarmament and fissile materials.

We hope that the second Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which will be held next September, will be a fresh opportunity for encouraging the signature and ratification of this international legal instrument by States that have not yet done so. As President of that Conference, Mexico will do its utmost to ensure that this objective be accomplished.

At this session of the Commission, the Mexican delegation will also make an active contribution to the discussions geared towards reflecting in the Chairperson's document those recommendations that facilitate the definition of ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament.

With regard to the second substantive item on our agenda, we welcome the initiative of Mrs. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, the Chairperson of Working Group II, for the timely distribution of her working document on practical confidence-building measures vis-à-vis conventional weapons. We support the format of that document. It has five major sections. We expect that the content of some of the introductory paragraphs and the list of practical measures will have to be refined with a view to reaching consensus. We believe that priority should be given to considering that document in order to proceed to defining the recommendations on this topic at next year's session. My delegation will work with other interested delegations to make progress in increasing confidence among States in the area of conventional weapons.

Mr. Ling (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to congratulate you, Madam, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2001 substantive session. We are convinced that your diplomatic experience will assist the Commission in making this session fruitful and successful. You can depend upon the active cooperation and support of our delegation. I would also like to congratulate all the other members of the Bureau on their election to their posts. The delegation of Belarus would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive statement covering all the major aspects of the Commission's activities.

The Disarmament Commission, together with the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament, is being called upon to play a special and unique role by providing a forum for holding deliberations and making decisions on the most urgent problems challenging the international community — those related to promoting disarmament and maintaining international peace and security. At its current session, the Disarmament Commission will continue to discuss the problems of nuclear disarmament and capacity-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

We are not starting from scratch. We have at our disposal two working documents that provide a good basis for conducting productive deliberations and working out relevant proposals and recommendations. The compromise on nuclear disarmament issues achieved at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons provides a solid basis for our work. The programme adopted by all States and contained in the Final Document of that Conference provides the international community with a clear vision of the steps that must be taken in the near future.

First, we believe that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) should enter into force as soon as possible. The Republic of Belarus ratified the CTBT and deposited its instrument of ratification in 2000, thus reaffirming its consistent and dependable policy with respect to ensuring nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and maintaining international peace and security. Our delegation attaches special significance to ensuring the universality of that Treaty. Belarus believes that it is extremely important for the forthcoming September 2001 conference on facilitating its entry into force to be successful.

Secondly, Belarus, as a State that voluntarily rejected the opportunity to continue to possess nuclear weapons and, in 1997, completed their removal from its territory, is convinced that it is necessary to provide legally binding assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Belarus supports efforts aimed at the elaboration of an international convention on legally binding assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. At the same time, we welcome the unilateral declarations made by the nuclear-weapon States with regard to their policy of rejecting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

Belarus is continuing fully to observe its international obligations under agreements in the field of nuclear disarmament. In particular, under the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Nuclear Missiles — the INF Treaty — Belarus eliminated 584 intermediate- and shorter-range nuclear missiles, as well as their launchers and related auxiliary equipment. The final inspection under the INF Treaty, conducted in Belarus in February 2001, confirmed that our country is strictly observing all the conditions and prohibitions provided for under the Treaty. The Treaty has played a significant role in reducing military threat and strengthening strategic stability, peace and international security.

The Republic of Belarus is pursuing responsible policies in the area of export control, and the admission of our country to the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2000 is proof of full compliance by Belarus with internationally recognized export control standards.

Thirdly, we believe that the preservation of and strict compliance with the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty are the most important components of the maintenance of strategic stability determining the global disarmament process. The deployment of a national anti-ballistic missile system in violation of the ABM Treaty will undermine the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime and will affect in the most negative manner the entire system of global strategic stability that has taken dozens of years to build up. Strategic stability is a priority issue for all States without exception, and the relevant deliberations should be carried out in a multilateral and non-bloc format, with the participation of all interested States and with full respect for the United Nations Charter. In this connection, the initiatives put forward by the Russian Federation on setting up a European non-strategic anti-ballistic missile system and a global control system for missiles and missile technologies are timely and promising.

Fourthly, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament should begin deliberations as soon as possible on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes. The speediest possible establishment of a subsidiary body at the Conference on Disarmament will make it possible to fully focus on examining this issue in all its aspects.

Fifthly, Belarus believes that nuclear disarmament should be complemented by practical steps aimed at strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime, including by consolidating existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and setting up new ones. Belarus continues to believe that the initiative on setting up a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe is extremely important for promoting regional and global security and stability. We are convinced that the time will come when this initiative will become a reality. Belarus is open to interaction on this issue with the States in the region and all other States.

Belarus is convinced that practical measures aimed at achieving nuclear disarmament — including, inter alia, transparency with respect to nuclear weapons, the irreversibility of measures in the field of nuclear disarmament, a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policy and strategic concepts, and a more active approach to the elimination of nuclear arsenals — should determine the entire course of agreed actions undertaken by the international community in the field of nuclear disarmament. The nuclear danger should be reduced through consistent step-by-step disarmament measures, with the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons as a final goal.

The Republic of Belarus has been pursuing a responsible and consistent policy aimed at fulfilling its international obligations, including under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). Having eliminated, despite economic and financial hardship, nearly 10 per cent of all heavy military equipment — destroyed under the Treaty provisions — Belarus has made a significant contribution to the strengthening of regional and global trust and cooperation. In 2000, Belarus was also the first State member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to ratify the CFE adaptation agreement.

Today, with the risk of global military confrontation considerably reduced but with local armed conflicts proliferating and threatening regional and global security, the elaboration of confidence-building measures and more active cooperation between neighbouring States, regional organizations and military and political alliances is becoming increasingly important.

We are convinced that a gradual movement from simple to more complex bilateral and multilateral measures and agreements will set up a solid basis for the prevention of armed conflicts and the strengthening of national and regional security, which, in turn, are inalienable elements of the modern architecture of a comprehensive and indivisible system of international security. The elaboration of a wide-ranging set of confidence-building measures under the auspices of the OSCE could serve as an efficient model for successfully promoting interaction among States with differing approaches and views. Our delegation would also like to emphasize the interrelationship between regional and global approaches to developing confidence-building measures, as well as the importance of undertaking both legally and politically binding obligations in this sphere.

Confidence-building measures and arms control regimes should be further developed, fully taking into account the objective realities of the development of advanced technologies in the area of conventional weapons, first and foremost, offensive weapons. In this connection, Belarus believes that confidence-building measures should also cover such important elements of

modern war tactics and strategy as military naval activities and the combat air component.

We support the non-paper on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms proposed by the Chairperson of the Working Group. My delegation considers that balanced document to be a solid basis for our deliberations aimed at reaching consensus on a wide range of possible confidence-building measures and at formulating specific, practical recommendations during this session. Belarus attaches particular importance to formulating bilateral confidence-building measures, which it views as a foreign-policy priority. We are open to interaction and cooperation with neighbouring States in promoting and discussing a broad range of issues relating to arms control, transparency and confidence- and security-building in the region. I am pleased to inform members that Belarus has been successfully engaged in productive discussions with its neighbours on these and other issues.

Permit me in conclusion to express my delegation's hope that this will be a successful and productive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): It pleases me, Madam, to congratulate you on your well deserved election to the Chair of the Disarmament Commission. I take this opportunity also to wish you every success in your difficult task and to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. My congratulations go also to the other officers. I cannot fail to pay tribute, Madam, to your predecessor for his praiseworthy work in chairing the Commission; I deeply appreciate the manner in which he guided our work at the last session.

The end of the cold war eased the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust that loomed over international relations, and gave rise to optimism fuelled by emerging new prospects for détente. We hope that this will ultimately put an end to the use of obsolete doctrines and theories of nuclear deterrence and the balance of terror, and will open the way to the use of a strategic as opposed to a military approach to protect the national security of States. Our wish for a planet forever free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction can only be strengthened in the light of this qualitative change in international relations.

Hence, the objective of general and complete disarmament has gradually regained all its meaning and relevance. Its attainment should be part of a process firmly based on scrupulous respect for the principles set out in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and for the priorities it laid down — the most urgent of which is nuclear disarmament.

Now more than ever before, fruitful bilateral and multilateral negotiation and cooperation should be pursued in order to achieve disarmament and to bring about a new era based on collective and universal security for the benefit of all. It is therefore important to refrain from initiatives that could threaten the climate of détente, renew the arms race and destroy everything that has been so laboriously and patiently achieved in recent years to make the world safer for future generations.

In that spirit, the Disarmament Commission — whose effectiveness is attested to by its encouraging achievements — is the proper international forum for reflection and for proposing recommendations with a view to consolidating gains, for participating in the international community's efforts to restart the disarmament process and for laying the foundation for a new vision of international peace and security focusing sharply on the future and integrating economic and social development.

My country sincerely wishes to attain general and complete disarmament and genuine collective security; it will therefore contribute, as usual, to the work of the Commission. We hope that, with the cooperation of us all, we will reach agreement on the two substantive items appearing on our agenda for the second year.

The item entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", which will be considered in Working Group I, is of crucial importance to the edifice of disarmament and international security, to whose completion we aspire and for which we shall work together. The document submitted by the Chairperson of the Working Group at our last session is a good basis, which we should supplement in order to sketch the outlines of an approach to nuclear disarmament that will respond to the wishes of all. In that regard, the results achieved in recent years in the nuclear sphere prompt us to make further efforts to achieve the final and complete elimination of the nuclear threat. Piecemeal steps and approaches with respect to the reduction of nuclear stockpiles, though certainly useful, are interim measures. Beyond these, nuclear disarmament essentially means that we must

work purposefully on the unilateral, bilateral and multilateral levels to rid Earth of all nuclear weapons.

In our view, nuclear disarmament inevitably means a complete break with a system based on doctrines of deterrence and military supremacy; it can be actively undertaken in a revitalized Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament matters, with a view to setting a programme of work that will enable the Conference to conduct negotiations on binding legal instruments linked to nuclear disarmament, to guarantees of the non-use of nuclear weapons, and to the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

In that connection, the following elements mark the appropriate path to nuclear disarmament: the implementation of the historic commitment unequivocally made by nuclear States at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in April 2000 at New York, totally to eliminate their nuclear arsenals; the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the implementation of article VI of that Treaty; and the cessation of the nuclear arms race.

On the second substantive item, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", we hope that our work at this session will result in a document featuring compromise language that takes due account of the legitimate concerns of all delegations.

Here, let me recall Algeria's position. We consider that any initiative with respect to confidence-building must be comprehensive: it must strengthen peace and security, promote arms limitation and contribute to both conventional and nuclear disarmament. To single out conventional weapons as the only area to which confidence-building measures can apply reflects a fragmentary approach that does not serve our common interests. Moreover, if they are to be complete and constructive, confidence-building measures with respect to conventional weapons should be part of a set of mutually strengthening military and non-military actions.

Thus, political and economic factors that could have a direct effect on security are indispensable for giving full meaning to confidence-building measures, because they are a prerequisite for the completion of the process, which must be gradual and progressive.

Indeed, confidence-building measures, whose objective is to create conditions for peaceful coexistence and to improve international relations through cooperation and solidarity, would be greatly strengthened by the reaffirmation of respect for universally acknowledged and accepted principles, particularly those set forth in the Charter of the United Nations: the right to self-defence, the non-use of force or the threat of the use of force against the territorial integrity or the political independence of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the sovereign equality of States and the right of peoples to self-determination. They would be strengthened even more if they were based on the will and commitment of States to reject any will to hegemony, resort to military doctrines of deterrence and the initiation of a frenzied conventional arms race.

Continuing to develop new types of more sophisticated and devastating weapons — synonymous with the production and accumulation of weapons — is obviously not likely to improve prospects for disarmament or for confidence-building measures. Furthermore, such a situation tends to favour certain States or groups of States, while the national security of others is considerably diminished. This could undermine all attempts to establish and enhance confidence and could negate the efforts made in this context.

Economic measures that have direct effects on security and the establishment of an equitable international economic and non-marginalizing environment are elements that contribute to strengthening the confidence-building process.

As for the Register of Conventional Arms, we remain convinced that its functioning cannot be ensured without universal and honest participation involving all aspects linked to weapons and all categories of arms.

A balanced treatment of the various elements of transparency in international weapons transfers should not proceed from a selective, and therefore discriminatory, approach; rather, it should aim at establishing a register as a universal and global system that requires that essential aspects be taken into consideration, such as national capacities for production and related purchases, weapons stockpiles and the rapid expansion of the system to cover

weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. Recourse and reference to controversial concepts could constitute an obstacle to the completion of our work.

That said, and despite certain difficulties that this question raises and the difficulty of defining its parameters, my delegation will continue to follow with great interest the work of this group, and it reiterates its readiness to provide its full assistance to the Chair in promoting deliberations in order to achieve a balanced text that would enjoy general consensus.

Before concluding, I would like to say that at this critical stage of our history, multilateralism, with all that it entails concerning the participation of all on an equal footing, is a precious element in and a useful framework for our shared quest for general and complete disarmament.

With the Conference on Disarmament having just concluded the first part of its work in Geneva and facing an impasse that is of great concern to us, I would like to share with members the hope that our Commission will continue to serve as a framework for productive and fruitful exchanges, as it has always done, including during periods when international relations have lacked calm and serenity.

Ms. Rodríguez (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Argentine delegation, I join in the congratulations expressed by other delegations on your election, Madam Chairperson, to preside over our work. We are convinced that your diplomatic experience will enable us to achieve the proposed goals. I also wish to extend the congratulations and greetings of my delegation to the other members of the Bureau.

I would like, at the outset, to express the importance that my country attaches to the current deliberations and the certitude that at their conclusion we will achieve the consensus necessary to make concrete recommendations in the area of nuclear disarmament, as well in the area of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. The frank and constructive exchange of ideas that this forum provides will certainly allow us to achieve these objectives. In this connection, I wish to express my delegation's willingness to do whatever may be necessary to achieve that end.

Despite the progress made in nuclear disarmament through persistent international action, the strategic international panorama has not been very encouraging in recent years, and the situation remains one of concern regarding the risk of proliferation. However, the will expressed by the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in the document adopted at the sixth Review Conference, held in April and May 2000, confirms their commitment with regard to article VI of the Treaty and the agreement on a series of practical measures to implement that article, which permits us to view the future with a bit more optimism.

In this regard, we believe that we should not lose the momentum generated since the sixth Review Conference and should bear in mind that the enormous importance of non-proliferation for international peace and security calls for a belief in the moral obligation to achieve it.

I wish to reiterate in this regard that complete disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy are permanent goals that Argentina would like to see achieved.

Our country has a long tradition, experience and legitimate credentials regarding nuclear matters. As part of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, we are convinced of the benefits that these zones provide to their member States. Proliferation risks increase the threat of a nuclear conflict, and any action that can be taken with a view to avoiding this possibility should be strongly supported, particularly by using the instruments that the nuclear safeguards provide. My country is very active in this field, both with the International Atomic Energy Agency and in the regional framework, through the work of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) and export controls.

We reiterate once again Argentina's commitment to a safer world that is free of the risks that nuclear arms represent.

With regard to confidence-building measures at the level of conventional arms, Argentina, together with the other countries of the region, and particularly its neighbours Brazil and Chile, has been making a great effort, through these measures, among others, aimed at consolidating friendly relations of great confidence and productivity.

This is part of a change in our concept of international security that emerged when our countries restored their democratic institutions. In this context, we understand security to be that which makes it possible to consolidate essential values, such as representative democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. This change of concept, together with integration processes at the regional and subregional levels, has transformed the security paradigm and made it possible to think in a new way about our neighbours, which are no longer considered competitors or enemies, but partners. Thus, security in our hemisphere no longer rests upon a system of military relations; rather, it is founded on relations of cooperation, transparency, mutual confidence and the defence of shared values.

In the context of security, we accord high priority to the excellent relations of friendship and cooperation that we have with our neighbours, and we believe that working together in this area will redound to our mutual benefit, and to that of the entire region. This does not in any way mean that we cannot have close relations with other nations and international organizations.

Progress among our countries in these areas in recent years is a source of legitimate pride and testified to the benefits that can flow from cooperative relations. As I said earlier, confidence-building measures that we have implemented regionally, subregionally and bilaterally have contributed greatly to the creation of this new reality in our hemisphere.

I should like to provide some military and non-military examples of this cooperation. At the regional level, our countries have ratified the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; the Inter-American Convention against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. We also hold regular meetings of the Ministers of Defence of the Americas, as well as conferences of American armies.

At the subregional level, the countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), together with Bolivia and Chile, have signed the Political Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace, and joint military exercises are carried out on a regular basis.

At the bilateral level, especially in the case of Argentina, Chile and Brazil, annual meetings take place between Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Defence, and we have a mechanism for consultation among the chiefs of staff of the armed forces. Regular meetings are held on security and defence. We have signed scientific and technological agreements relating to production for defence. We are promoting the integration of troops from one country into the armies of other countries in the context of peacekeeping operations. Military equipment has been sent from one country to another for repair, and military personnel from one country have been trained in another. Positions are coordinated at international meetings, information is exchanged on military expenditure, teachers and students take part in exchanges among military academies, and joint exercises take place on a regular basis.

I should like to take this opportunity to mention an initiative that we have taken together with the Government of Chile, which we consider to be completely novel — at least at the American level. I am referring to the work that the two countries have entrusted to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for the development of a standardized methodology to measure defence expenditure. This initiative is a further demonstration of the trust and transparency between Argentina and the fraternal country of Chile, and we hope that other countries in the region will make use of that model and duplicate it.

ECLAC has already submitted a preliminary document that is under consideration by the two Governments. In due course, we will give our opinions and make comments so that ECLAC can include them in the document and thereby finish this work. In the final analysis, Argentina believes that everything that can be done in this regard can only consolidate peace and security among States, and in this respect we would again like to reiterate how important we consider this forum to be in helping us to achieve our common goals.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): It is a pleasure for my delegation and an honour for our regional group to see you, Madam, presiding over this Commission. Your assumption of the chairmanship also gives us a sense of

gender balance, which is so needed in disarmament issues. You and the other members of the Bureau may rest assured of our cooperation for a fruitful session.

We would also like to pay tribute to Deputy Minister Javad Zarif of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his competent work as Chairman last year.

I would also like to commend Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala, under whose leadership the Department for Disarmament Affairs is playing an invigorated role. I thank him for his statement to the Commission.

Last year, as we began a new three-year cycle in the Disarmament Commission, Brazil reaffirmed its belief that the discussion of the two main items would finish well only if it started well. This point of view is even more valid this year. We underline the importance of maintaining a permanent spirit of cooperation and of striving for consensus, even though no final decision is to be taken before next year's session. The fact that this is an intermediary year in our deliberations should not lead to complacency or the avoidance of discussion. On the contrary, this Commission should seriously discuss the issues that are put before it and try to advance as much as possible.

In this context, let me express our view that sometimes an excess of zeal is as bad as that which it is trying to avoid and may hurt the credibility of the Commission as a whole. We should not lose sight of the fact that this is not a body that negotiates legally binding agreements. Rather, this is the only universal forum dedicated to the long-term discussion of disarmament issues. My delegation therefore hopes that we can all exercise our prerogative to discuss future options for disarmament in the Disarmament Commission without the constraints that characterize the negotiation of binding documents. Brazil understands that it is in no one's interest for the Disarmament Commission to be seen as failing as the forum for such deliberations. The need to strive for a substantial result here is even more evident if we take into account that the prospects for progress and agreement in other disarmament forums are far from reassuring.

With regard to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, Brazil appreciates the work that has been done since last year by the Chairperson of Working Group II. We believe that the Chairperson's paper presented last session was a genuine effort of compilation that provided an excellent basis for discussion. We are sure that this Commission will be able to work constructively on the new text that has been circulated informally. Brazil commends the transparency with which the Chairperson has been working and welcomes the early circulation of her non-paper.

The Brazilian bilateral, regional and multilateral experience in the issue of confidence-building impacts in a very positive manner our perception of this subject. We therefore would encourage delegations to approach the upcoming discussions in an open spirit so that this Commission can better understand the implications and results of the confidence-building measures it discusses.

My delegation is of the view that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should be better utilized by Member States as a confidence-building tool. We support this instrument and hope to see an increase in the number of participating countries. We would also wish to see broader participation in the United Nations standardized system of reporting on military expenditures. Regionally, the Americas have an outstanding number of confidence-building measures that are being implemented with good results. Regional confidence-building measures have both influenced and been influenced by the development of subregional and bilateral measures with our neighbours. Brazil looks forward to a successful debate on this issue in Working Group II.

Unfortunately, in the field of nuclear disarmament, the scene is still marked by distressing signs. Recent events can hardly be catalogued as "ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament". The lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament is discouraging. We would like to see progress on the basis of the proposal formulated during the Brazilian presidency, as contained in document CD/1624. One year after the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and more than six months after the Millennium Summit, little political will has been shown to prove that those were not isolated events and that the commitments undertaken at those occasions are to be followed up.

In the same vein, unilateral measures that could lead to a change in the strategic stability may trigger either an arms race or a proliferation of shields. That,

in turn, could reverse the current logic of the advantages of disarmament. In this context, it is all the more relevant that Working Group I should seriously debate its subject and advances in the formulation of a substantive document for adoption next year. We pledge our support to the Chairman of Working Group I in his quest for a meaningful exchange of views in the next three weeks.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore the conviction of my delegation that this will be a very positive session. A frank and substantive exchange of views in the two Working Groups, taking into account the dynamics of the real world outside this room and the need for concrete new ideas to further the cause of disarmament, would be a step in the right direction to reaffirm the importance of the Disarmament Commission and to lay the foundations for a successful conclusion of this cycle next year.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.